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UNCLAS VATICAN 000882

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EUR/WE (LEVIN); WHA/CAR

E.O. 12958 N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [HA](#) [VT](#)

SUBJECT: HOLY SEE COMMITTED TO STABILITY FOR HAITI

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) FOLLOWING ARISTIDE'S RESIGNATION AND DEPARTURE FROM HAITI, THE HOLY SEE TOLD US THAT THE HAITIAN BISHOPS WERE READY TO WORK ACTIVELY WITH A PROVISIONAL ADMINISTRATION TO HELP ENSURE A PEACEFUL TRANSITION OF POWER. THE SECRETARIAT OF STATE IS IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH THE HAITIAN BISHOPS AND PAPAL NUNCIO IN PORT-AU-PRINCE, AND HAS URGED THEM TO EXERT A CALMING INFLUENCE ON THE POPULACE. END SUMMARY.

BISHOPS READY TO WORK WITH NEW GOVERNMENT

2. (SBU) THE HOLY SEE'S DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER PIETRO PAROLIN TOLD THE DCM MARCH 4 THAT THE HAITIAN BISHOPS AND THE VATICAN NUNCIO WERE READY TO WORK WITH A NEW TRANSITIONAL HAITIAN ADMINISTRATION TO ENSURE A PEACEFUL RESTORATION OF ORDER. PAROLIN SAID THE PAPAL NUNCIO TO HAITI HAD BEEN IN ROME DURING THE HEIGHT OF THE CRISIS BUT HAD NOW RETURNED TO PORT-AU-PRINCE WITH INSTRUCTIONS TO HELP FACILITATE THE TRANSITION AND WORK WITH THE BISHOPS TO ENCOURAGE CALM AND PATIENCE AMONG THE HAITIAN PEOPLE. THE DFM EXPRESSED INTEREST IN LATEST DEVELOPMENTS ON THE GROUND, AND ASKED ABOUT THE NEWS REPORTS ABOUT ARISTIDE'S CLAIMS OF BEING FORCED TO RESIGN, WHICH DCM EMPHASIZED HAD NO BASIS IN FACT. PAROLIN VOICED NO REGRET AT ARISTIDE'S DEPARTURE, NOTING THAT THE FORMER PRIEST HAD BEEN AN ACTIVE PROPONENT OF VOODOO.

IT WAS TIME FOR HIM TO GO

3. (SBU) EVEN BEFORE ARISTIDE'S DEPARTURE, POPE JOHN PAUL II HAD APPEALED TO HAITIANS "TO MAKE THE COURAGEOUS DECISIONS THEIR COUNTRY REQUIRED," AND HAD URGED THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND AID ORGANIZATIONS TO DO WHAT THEY COULD TO AVERT A GREATER CRISIS. THIS WAS SEEN AS A VEILED REFERENCE TO ARISTIDE'S LEAVING POWER. SINCE FEBRUARY 29, THE VATICAN HAS HAD NO OFFICIAL PUBLIC COMMENT ON ARISTIDE'S RESIGNATION; HOWEVER, THE VATICAN'S CARIBBEAN AFFAIRS DIRECTOR MONSIGNOR GIORGIO LINGUA SAID THAT THE HOLY SEE SAW NO OTHER WAY OUT OF THE CRISIS AND THOUGHT THE FORMER PRIEST HAD TO GO. LINGUA SAID MARCH 3 THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT AN INTERNATIONAL FORCE QUICKLY RESTORE ORDER IN HAITI SO THAT A PEACEFUL GOVERNMENTAL TRANSITION COULD TAKE PLACE. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT A POLITICAL SOLUTION SHOULD NOT BE IMPOSED FROM OUTSIDE. LINGUA SAID HE SAW SEVERAL HOPEFUL SIGNS THAT THE TRANSITION COULD OCCUR WITHOUT A BLOOD BATH, POINTING OUT THAT REBEL LEADER GUY PHILIPPE SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN CONVINCED TO STAND DOWN AND ESCHEW POLITICAL POWER IN LINE WITH HIS INITIAL PROMISE THAT HIS SOLDIERS WOULD COOPERATE WITH INTERNATIONAL FORCES.

CATHOLIC RELIEF AT RISK

4. (U) ROME-BASED MEDIA HAVE REPORTED THAT CATHOLIC CHURCH RELIEF ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING U.S.-BASED CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES (CRS) HAVE SUFFERED CONSIDERABLE LOSSES OF FOOD STOCKS AND VEHICLES BECAUSE OF LOOTING -- WHICH CRS OFFICIALS REPORT IS CONTINUING. DFM PAROLIN NOTED THAT THE HOLY SEE WOULD APPRECIATE INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT TO RESTART THE RELIEF PIPELINES AND GET THE NEEDED FOOD AND SUPPLIES OUT TO THE PEOPLE IN NEED.

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